

REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL ON WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2016

Isle of Wight Bus Services

The General Manager of Southern Vectis (Mr Matt Kitchin), the Island's Bus Company, provided members with a PowerPoint presentation on the company's position with regard to providing public transport on the Isle of Wight.

As a result of the cuts being made by Central Government upon local authorities, Southern Vectis had endeavoured to maintain as much of the network as possible with reviews of every route and journey. Alternative funding streams had also been identified and worked with as well as changing the fares structure for 16 - 18 year olds. Members were asked to note that following funding cuts and the changes made to counter them, Southern Vectis still maintained a comprehensive rural bus network and innovative community bus schemes were retained where passenger numbers had justified it. 89% of journeys were completely unaffected and over 95% of customer journeys remained unchanged. The committee was also advised that whilst not every journey made a profit, all efforts had been made to ensure that direct costs were covered. With regard to comparing services to the mainland, the Island did provide a more comprehensive provision and members noted that the Island was one of very few areas in the country where a service was provided on Christmas Day.

The committee recommended that an active dialogue be opened and maintained between Town and Parish councils along with other interested bodies, to explore possible options around the Community Bus service delivery that would affect all Island communities, especially those around rural locations, and areas of social need. The Isle of Wight Council and Southern Vectis enter into further discussions around the benefits and feasibility of establishing a Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership

Parking Strategy Update

To date, various reviews had taken place by WYG which included a policy review of legislation, a best practice and benchmarking review - which looked at examples of good and bad practice around provision of parking as well as a data review which analysed how the Island's towns differed with regard to parking habits by looking at back office functions and tickets for long and short stay car parks as well as street parking. In addition to this, various site surveys of car parks had been conducted over the different seasons with number plate recognition cameras providing relevant data. Some of the information was then shared at a stakeholder's consultation session at Medina Leisure Centre, which was attended amongst others by Isle of Wight councillors, Town and Parish councillors and various representatives from business associations. Important priorities for the various areas would then need to be identified and actioned with a right balance being achieved for resident and commuter parking. All of the gathered information has been collated for the report which will form the basis of the public consultation period.

Subject to Executive Member agreement, further consultation on the draft strategy may then be required before being presented for formal approval by members in 2016. This committee did ask, in March 2016, for a copy of the draft report before it went out to general release in May, enabling this committee to help formulate meaningful engagement during this process. Unfortunately we did not get sight of this before its wider release in May, which was somewhat disappointing.

Community Highways Fund Update

The Head of Contract Management advised committee members that the Community Highways Fund (CHF) had been debated by the Executive at its meeting on 27 October 2015 and that the process by which the CHF would be delivered, as well as the adoption of the criteria recommended by this committee for prioritisation of schemes was agreed.

Since June 2015, two engineering officers had been recruited (including one who had returned from working with Island Roads). The new team would look at a work plan of prioritised projects who would then update the select committee in due course. There would also be a need to address the backlog of items that had built up with a view to identifying what was and wasn't still required, with an aim of producing a manageable list of schemes that needed addressing first. Local Town and Parish councils would then be contacted to provide advice of what the priorities were. They would also be requested to provide any relevant feedback.

The select committee also requested that, depending on the feasibility, that all Isle of Wight Council Members be sent the list of prioritised schemes. Members were reminded that any accrual costs would also need to be taken into account when looking at the amount of spend, which would be over and above the initial agreed costs of a project and could be significant for a relatively small matter such as a bus shelter. The accrual cost covered maintenance over the remaining life of the Highways PFI contract.

It was also noted that some items might not be worth accruing to the network, as the cost to replace them at a later date may be a more cost effective way of dealing with the item for the Council.

TROs

This item was discussed at last week's meeting, with ongoing dialogue to be put in place to hopefully develop a workable policy to deal with this issue. TROs cause individual members some of the biggest gripes from their residents; I will update members in due course.

Councillor Jon Gilbey
Chairman of Environment and Transport Select Committee